

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-7, 9-15, and 17-22 are currently pending in the present application, with Claims 2, 8, and 16 being canceled, Claims 1, 3-7, 9, 11, 14, and 15 being amended, and Claims 19-22 being added. Reconsideration and reexamination of the claims are respectfully requested.

The Examiner rejected Claims 1, 8-10, 15, and 16 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Niimi (U.S. patent no. 6,084,974), Claim 2 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Niimi, and Claim 7 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Niimi in view of Stockham Jr. et al. (U.S. patent no. 5,848,171). These rejections are moot with respect to the canceled claims, and are respectfully traversed with respect to the amended claims.

The present invention as recited in Claim 1 is directed to a method of adjusting levels of amplifiers in a multi-input channel audio system. Specifically, the recited method allows a user to separate the multi-channels into one or more groups of channels so as to provide the ability to process certain channels while isolating certain other channels from the processing. In this instance, each group is analyzed to detect a maximal signal level (from one of the input channels), and, in accordance with the detected maximal signal level, effect the appropriate amplification/gain of the input signals for that group; the higher the detected maximal signal level, the less gain is required. Further details of this particular embodiment can be found in paragraph [0024] of the present application, with references to Figs. 8(a) to 8(d) of the present application. Amended independent Claims 15 is directed to an audio processing apparatus, and contains similar subject matter as amended Claim 1.

Niimi is directed to a digital signal processing device for effecting non-linear gain to a signal. Niimi does not contain any disclosure or suggestion of an input-channel grouping type select process of selecting a desired type of grouping from different types of grouping of the input

channels. Although the Examiner, at page 2 of the Detailed Action, alluded that Niimi discloses an inherent group arrangement process (channels Di1-Di), Applicant submits that Niimi does not teach or suggest selecting a desired type of grouping of input channels from different types of grouping of input channels. Rather, Fig. 13 of Niimi shows only a selector 7 at the input stage of a DSP circuit, no mention is made as to selecting a group of input channels from different types of grouping (as recited in amended Claims 1 and 15). Stockham fails to make up for this deficiency of Niimi. Stockham discloses a hearing aid device, and makes no mention of grouping of input channels.

Applicant respectfully submits that amended Claims 1, 7, 9, 10, and 15 are not anticipated by, nor obvious in view of, Niimi and Stockham, either alone or in combination. Furthermore, Applicant traverses the combination of Niimi and Stockham as the Examiner has not adequately demonstrated the necessary motivation for combining the references.

Applicant acknowledges with thanks that the Examiner has indicated Claims 17 and 18 to be allowable.

The Examiner objected to Claims 3-6 and 11-14 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicant submits that dependent Claims 3-6 are in condition for allowance for the same reasons provided above with respect to amended Claim 1. Claim 11 has been amended into independent form and Applicant submits that amended Claim 11 (and therefore dependent Claims 12-14) contains patentable subject matter similar to amended Claim 1, which are not disclosed by any of the cited references; specifically, the cited references do not disclose or teach a group arrangement process for grouping input channels into two or more groups.

New Claims 19-22 have been added to claim additional aspects of the present invention, and are respectfully submitted as in condition for allowance.

In view of the above, Applicant submits that each of the presently pending claims of the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney at anytime with any further questions or clarifications regarding the claimed subject matter.

In the unlikely event that the transmittal letter is separated from this document and the Patent Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, Applicant petitions for any required relief including extensions of time and authorizes the Assistant Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to Deposit Account No. 03-1952 referencing docket no. 393032038900. However, the Assistant Commissioner is not authorized to charge the cost of the issue fee to the Deposit Account.

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